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ABSTRACT

The use of guided imagery meshes with recent insights into right and left brain learning. Guided imagery engages the right brain processes such as imagination, emotion, creative, and intuitive activities. While much instruction is concerned with left brain activity, that is, the processsing of information through words, the addition of right brain activities involves the whole brain in the learning process and provides for individual differences in learning preferences and modalities. The use of imagery in therapy and in the classroom is not new; however, by consciously using it as a teaching device, the teacher can put it to use consistently and effectively. While much research is still to be done, experience indicates that use of guided imagery techniques improves the learning and behavior of low achieving students and stimulates the creativity of both students and teachers on all levels. The teacher in preparing and introducing the guided image should consider content, multi-sensory appeal, practice, and introduction of the image to the students. Sample lessons in images from German literature and grammar are given, with some explanation, which can be adapted to other languages and levels of instruction. (AMH)

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GUIDED IMAGERY IN THE CLASSROOM:
AN ENHANCEMENT TO LEARNING

A guided image as a teaching technique in the classroom is a specific mental experience which students are led to form or imagine by the teacher, who promotes construction of the image primarily through the use of words. Such imagery activities can be used to provoke emotional involvement with the material to be learned in order to promote more effective learning for more students. It is a presupposition that affective involvement produces better learning than occurs without such a dimension.

The usage of guided imagery meshes well with recent ideas in the field of education such as right and left brain learning. According to current theory the left brain is the center of analysis of words while the right brain processes other informational codes such as emotions, movement, imagination, and creative and intuitive activities. Though education has changed drastically in recent decades, it is still true that most of what occurs in the classroom setting is oriented to left brain learning, i.e., the processing of information through words. As soon as an additional channel is engaged -- whether through the dramatic and physical involvement of a role playing task, the physical response to a command, the usage of music, creative writing activities or a guided image -- the right brain is engaged in learning. Thus, the whole brain is involved, and more effective learning occurs than if only one of the brain hemispheres is active. While the discussion of right and left brain functions or whole brain learning is considered by some to still be theory, many experiences of foreign language teachers, TEFL teachers, and teachers from other disciplines as well would seem to validate this theory in practice. For example, one need only consider the usage of songs in language learning,

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or learning in general, and the manner in which these songs are learned and retained as compared with the learning and retention of grammar and mathematical facts or vocabularly items to realize the validity of a phenomenon arising from whole brain learning. The guided image is indeed introduced through the use of words primarily; however, this is not to be understood solely as a left brain expression. Through non-verbal communication such as emotion and feeling in the voice of the teacher and gestures or body language, right brain expression is also being employed. The guided image stimulates the imagination and, in the process, as will be explained later, multi-sensory appeal is used so that the right brain is engaged.

A second educational movement with which the guided image harmonizes is the human potential movement of both the psychological and educational fields. According to this belief within education, the individual has a potential greater than is being realized through prevailing instructional techniques, and one can increase the learning by stimulating the untapped potential. This reserve may be tapped by the understanding and usage of direct and indirect suggestion and of affective and humanistic educational techniques. If indeed learning is enhanced through guided imagery, it is then tapping a normally unused potential.

The stimulus and use of the imagination through guided imagery, together with other imagizing techniques, as a device to promote learning or changes in behavior is not new to either formal teaching and learning or learning processes that occur outside the school setting. In therapy the usage of imagery is a well established therapeutic technique, and the essential psychological function of imagery is defined as that which "structures and creates some order that is meaningful and relevant to our physical and our psychological needs out of the terrifying chaos that is the world of sight, sound, smell, taste,

touch, and movement. Through the image we sift, select, and render down to a manageable scale both the world of the objects and our own human experience" (Gordon, 1972, p. 75). The therapist may use both unstructured and structured or guided imagery to gain information about the client, to establish understanding, to encourage conflict resolution, or to change mood such as in achieving a state of relaxation.

Within the classroom active, caring, and creative teachers from many disciplines have on a frequent and probably impromptu basis employed techniques to engage the imagination and promote imagery or visualization. When teaching the subjunctive mood, for example, the language teacher may say, "What if you were in..." and then proceed to describe with words a visual image of the desired scene. The bilingual/bicultural teacher may in the teaching of social sciences or language arts employ the "what if" mode to encourage effective problem solving. The art teacher may seek to provoke the student to creative expansion by a question such as, "What would it look like if...?"

Thus, the usage of images as part of the playful mode in the classroom is not new. However, by analyzing it as a teaching device, one can put it to planned and more effective use as compared to impromptu usage which is not likely to provide the student with the appropriate atmosphere and necessary time to form the actual and desired image. Moreover, by analysis more teachers can make use of the guided image technique. Those who use it in an unplanned manner are likely to be good visualizers themselves, and the use of the image is for them very natural.

Guided imagery, as maintained earlier, can lead to affective involvement with the material, and it also appears to have a positive effect on behaviors and can stimulate both student and teacher creativity. The minute the imagination is engaged, the affective domain is also involved. One can then use the image to serve as a "metaphor which will be as effective as an actual, factual,

historical representation" (Bandler and Grinder, 1979, p. 121). Metaphor is usually understood as a literary convention, and the power of metaphor in its widest sense as a device to provoke change or learning may not be realized. A simplified definition of metaphor is an analogous comparison of two different items, and it serves the purpose of expanding our understanding of one of the two items. For example, a common slang phrase among teenagers today is, "He's a turkey!" He is not a turkey, and the remark is metaphorical in its essence. By drawing the comparison with the turkey, the speaker of the utterance can expand the comprehension of the personality traits of the individual being described.

Putting metaphor into the context of this article, a guided image which leads to the imagination of a scene unknown to the student is serving as a metaphor. As an example one might think of differing cultures and value systems that are a part of bilingual/bicultural education as well as of TEFL and language instruction; indeed, such comparisons are becoming increasingly important in a number of disciplines in view of our modern, pluralistic society and world. A guided image might lead to the imagination of a scene illustrating differing social values and thus serve a metaphorical function to produce more learning and more understanding than results from a purely rational and verbal explanation. The appropriate degree of concentration must occur, however, before this metaphorical leap of understanding can be achieved.

An interesting aside to the powerful impact of guided imagery is to be found in its usage for the training of athletes. The theory is that, if the image is sufficiently concentrated, the body will not know the difference between the imagined physical activity and the actual physical activity.

While research on the effect of guided imagery in the classroom is limited, one recent report does show that its use has a very positive impact on the

behaviors of low achieving students (Galyean, 1980). The study investigated two beginning high school Spanish classes in the same school with the same teacher. All students were considered low achievers, and one class was led in guided imagery for one semester. At first it was two to three times a week and then every day. The image was designed to relax the students, to lead them to envision themselves as successful students, and to see others as helping them to learn. Twelve negative and four positive behaviors were evaluated in the course of the experiment. The results of the study reveal two positive behaviors that showed significant differences in the experimental class taught with guided imagery, and negative behaviors were less than half for this group. Moreover, negative behaviors increased through the semester in the control group without the guided imagery activity, and there was no such significant change in the experimental class. This study does not investigate the question of guided imagery and learning, rather behaviors. However, it is a safe assumption that learning will improve if class behaviors improve.

Experience shows that guided imagery also enhances both teacher and student creativity, a quality which for many has decreased with the move from child to adulthood and the development of reasoning powers: "Imagination imagery plays a prominent part in the creative activity of artists in all media. As we grow to adulthood in a modern industrialized society, it is to be expected that verbal modes of encoding experience will take precedence over the imagery modes of early childhood" (Richardson, 1969, p. 137). It is well accepted that imagination lessens as the child grows to adulthood, and the playful mode, the mode of imaginative creativity, is superceded by the rational, analytical mode. An induced return to this imaginative world can produce more creative thinking, and for this reason guided or even unstructured imagery may be of particular interest to art and creative writing teachers. It has also been my experience that involvement with imagery techniques as well as with

other right brain oriented activities stimulates teacher creativity so that one more frequently experiences the joy of the flash of creative insight into a teaching problem. The validity of play in all classrooms, including those of higher education, is a subject that deserves further consideration by educators.

Assuming then that one is willing to accept the value of guided imagery, the transfer to classroom practice can begin. Imagery refers to the collective mental experience, and an image, simply defined, is "... the perception of forms, or colors, or sounds, or smells, or movements, or tastes in the absence of an actual external stimulus which could have caused such perception" (Gordon, 1972, p. 63). The teacher in preparing and introducing the guided image activity should consider the following: 1) content, 2) multi-sensory appeal, 3) practice, 4) introduction.

The content of the image is determined by what one wishes to do and whether the image is of something familiar or something with which students have had little or no contact. If the image is to be a familiar scene, one should avoid giving instructions that have detailed content or conflict with the content already known, for this can interfere with the internal experience the student has already developed. For example, the foreign language teacher may, for the purpose of stimulating involved vocabulary learning, be guiding an image from a dialogue previously introduced. Perhaps there is a car in the dialogue. One would say, "On the side of the street a car is parked. What kind of car is it? What color is it?" One would not say, "The green Fiat is parked on the right hand side of the street," unless these facts had been specified in the dialogue or illustrated in a picture. The student might have already formed an image of a red Porsche, and the continuity of the student's image would be destroyed.

If, however, the image is something with which students can be expected to have had little or no contact, details of content can and should be included

because one is using the image to make known to the student that which was previously unknown. The elementary social studies teacher might wish to use a guided image as an introduction to a study of the Eskimo peoples, for example. An appropriate scene is selected and then fully described, keeping in mind that this generation of students may have a wealth of images collected from exposure to television. The bilingual teacher may also find it appropriate to use the image as a way to seek to correct common sterotypes or misunderstandings.

Multi-sensory appeal is a part of content; however, it is separated in this explanation because of its importance. It is through the multi-sensory appeal that the teacher can hope to reach more effectively to more students than through other techniques. This is "overlap," a concept developed in Neuro-Linguistic Programming, a model of communication. (Information about seminars and workshops on Neuro-Linguistic Programming may be obtained from Not, Lt., 517 Mission St., Santa Cruz, CA 95060.) According to this model, the channels through which we receive information are those of the five senses -- visual, auditory, kinesthetic, gustatory, and olfactory. The reader may appropriately sense a relationship between this concept of Neuro-Linguistic Programming and the current discussion in education about different learning styles.

Further, the visual, auditory, and kinesthetic modes are considered to be of greater importance in the learning process than the senses of taste and smell. It is also believed that each individual has among the three primary senses a favored mode which is for that individual the most effective learning channel. Thus, the teacher, by including an appeal to all five senses if possible, is arousing and involving all possible learning capabilities. The individual who favors auditory learning will be hearing words, and these words will provide an overlap into the other senses. The kinesthetic learner, likely to experience frustration in the normal classroom setting, will be

encouraged to become involved in the image forming process through the appeal to touch, physical sensation, and movement provided in the image. "The only thing you need to do in order to make it work for people who don't normally visualize is to join their system wherever they are -- wherever their consciousness is -- establish rapport and then slowly overlap to lead them into the system you want to engage them in fantasy with" (Bandler and Grinder, 1979, p. 44).

Using an activity like a guided image may be unusual for a number of teachers. It may, indeed represent a radical change in technique. For this reason, one is encouraged to practice so as to be completely comfortable and well acquainted with the image to be constructed. It ought not to be read, for the teacher must be confident of the material, manifesting no uncertainty or hesitation. However, one should realize that this activity may be quite brief, only a few minutes, and informal. Well modulated voice tone is important as is timing. One should not speak so fast that students do not have time to form the components of the image nor so slowly that they become bored. Of course, the teacher is also participating in the process of image formation.

Finally, the teacher provides a smooth introduction to fit the activity naturally into the classroom procedures. This is particularly important the first few times until students become accustomed to this kind of activity. When one thinks of the frequency with which the phrase "Just imagine..." is used in casual conversation, it will be realized that guided imagery is really not an unusual activity. Frequently students are instructed to close their eyes. For the sake of those who might feel hesitant at first and the contact lens wearers, one should add, "Keep them closed for as long as you are comfortable."

Sample images will now be explained and presented with the expectation that the readers will be able to transfer the ideas into their own fields of interest and teaching level. As it is in many respects more difficult to apply unusual techniques in classes with higher levels of abstraction than in classes with greater emphasis on skills acquisition, the first guided images to be explained have been used at the university level in the teaching of German literature.

The reader should note that the numbers of students studying literature both in English and in other languages has declined substantially in recent years. Thus, the teacher of literature has to overcome frequent disinterest and lethargy about this discipline, which previously thrived because of its inherent humanistic value. Anything one can do to create excitement and vary, though modestly, the lecture/discussion mode is worthwhile. Such obstacles to learning, however, will exist in every classroom.

In German literature of the Romantic period the concept of the "blue flower" is an important one and symbolizes the unattainable object of the romantic quest. Naturally, one can explain the idea during the lecture, students will take notes and are likely not to remember the concept for very long unless they continue the study of Germanistik. Yet it is a useful symbol for much more than German literature. Instead of following the traditional lecture mode, I took into class a small vase filled with several blue flowers and placed it unceremoniously in the middle of the table. At the appropriate time students were subtly guided into the following image:

> Look at the blue flowers . . . They're very beautiful and appealing to our eyes. Can you imagine what the petals feel like when you touch them? Soft and smooth -- velvety. And the flowers have an enticing fragrance that fills the air and

surrounds you, envelops you. A breeze comes up, you can hear its rustling, and the flowers begin moving, swaying back and forth. It is as though they were beckoning to you. See them moving, pulling you towards them. They want you to come to them. But before you is a hard, cold translucent wall, and you cannot get over it or around it. You can see the flowers, you can smell them, and you want to go to them. But the wall is between you and the flowers . . . Go pick them!

One pauses between sentences and enhances the image indirectly through, for example, a subtle swaying gesture when speaking of the movement or a deep breath when identifying the smell, or whatever non-verbal expression fits naturally with such a description. The image was presented in the target language since these students were advanced. Students were not instructed to close their eyes as the departure for the image was a real object. This procedure took no more time than explaining the same concept in a lecture style, but the reaction in the classroom and discussion in ensuing months of the class were clear indications that the idea was grasped much better by more students than with an alternative method. As this and all but one of the following images were conducted in German, both listening comprehension and new vocabulary effectively reinforced.

To convey the frustration represented in the works of Franz Kafka and to overcome the frequent alienation of reader reaction to Kafka's works, the image below was used after the scene had been read as a homework assignment. It is taken from The Metamorphosis (1949). Again unceremoniously, I walked to the door of our windowless classroom and closed it at the same time as I led into the image:

You know Gregor desperately wants to communicate with his family, and he feels he must get to work. Turn and look

at the door, please. Can you imagine that you see below the doorknob a keyhole and a rather large key protruding from it? See Gregor with his many little legs jump up to the door and stick to it because of the sticky substance on the bottoms of his many wiggly legs. His back is so broad that he covers almost the bottom half of the door. Then he grasps the cold, steeley key with his strong jaws and begins turning it. You can hear the scraping of the metal. His jaws are clenched around the key, so firmly that you can feel the pain of the pressure. This pressure causes a thick, viscous substance to flow from his mouth. It drips methodically onto the floor. And there is a repulsive smell that fills the room as this liquid drips. But Gregor is succeeding, the key is turning as he circles around it, moving his little legs. There is a final click of the lock. And Gregor rests his head against the handle.

This image is essentially a paraphrase, with some embellishment, of the scene in the story. By the engagement of the right brain through imagination, the student becomes more affectively involved with the material to encourage excitement about the left brain activity of literary analysis. Notice the switch in the middle of the image in pronoun forms of the sentence, "His jaws are clenched around the key, so firmly that you can feel the pain of the pressure." The reason for this is to bring the student further into the image activity. Most will probably find themselves clenching their jaws at that point.

In a second-year language class, one is concerned with the improvement of reading skills and tries to overcome the blocks to reading, a problem easily extrapolated into elementary and secondary classrooms. The foreign language student is inclined to look up every word that seems unfamiliar and is

disinclined to guess at meaning, which is done all the time in one's own language. If the degree of involvement with the material can be increased, the student may forget the desire to look up each word not recognized immediately, thus improving reading skills. As an introduction to the next day's reading assignment, a short story titled "Die unwürdige Greisin" (The Unworthy Old Lady") by Bertolt Brecht, students were led in this guided image which also included physical involvement:

> Please stand up. Move apart from each other a bit. Now, what would it be like if you were old? You probably wouldn't stand as straight as you are now. So bend over slightly. When you wake up in the morning, your back aches. Put your hand on your back to lessen the pain. If you look in a mirror, your hair is gray and wispy. Feel your gray hair with your hand. Now look down at your feet. They are swollen, and the veins stand out clearly. You shuffle into your old comfortable slippers. Your back still hurts, keep your hand on it. The smell about you is not fresh and springlike, rather old and musty. And as you look into the day ahead of you, what do you see? Will one of your children come by? Will a friend look in on you? Or will no one come? Will you hear the voice of no other? How will you pass the time of the day?

At this point, the class was over, and no further word of explanation was given. After standing bent over for the several minutes of this activity, one did indeed feel muscular aches.

Cultural materials of language instruction lend themselves very easily to the formation of images. An image could be used as an introductory or reinforcement activity. It could also serve as the introduction to a different activity. The following example is from a second-year language class:

It's fall now, a universal time of harvest. Let's pretend we're transported for a few moments to a small town in southern Germany, and we are there at the time of the harvest festival, specifically for the celebration of the wine festival. Close your eyes, and keep them closed for as long as you are comfortable. As we drive to the small village where the festival is being held, we pass through a lushly green, heavily forested and hilly landscape. After arriving at the festival grounds, you see a lot of people -- young people, old people, and children. Their clothing is brightly colored and festive; many are in dress based on folk costumes with the men wearing lederhosen and the women in dirndls. There is a large number of rough, wooden tables about, and you are welcomed as you sit down next to some strangers. They are, of course, speaking German, which you could hear as you approached them. Immediately you feel a part of the group, and you are caught up in the atmosphere of Gemütlichkeit. A variety of smells is about you -- the invigorating smell of the pine trees in the forest, the sausages cooking, and the pungent smell of the wine. Now you hear the sounds of the dance band beginning to warm up their instruments....Return slowly to this room and open your book to the new reading selection.

What are usually considered dry and dull facts can also be presented in the playful, imaginative mode though such images are much more difficult to create than the previous examples. In language, grammar must be considered among this body of facts. The following introduction to the German verb system was used and took only a couple of minutes. It established a positive and playful attitude for the explanation of grammar as compared to the rigidity that would be provoked by saying, for example, "Now sit up straight, and listen to this explanation. This is a complicated system." The image

was delivered in English, and it was not anticipated that students would become as involved with such an image as much as with the previous examples from literature:

> Please close your eyes. Keep them closed as long as you are comfortable. Now imagine that you are a verb. What would it be like to be a verb? You would be very important. Without you no sentence could exist. There would be no action -- no loving, no hating, nothing. You would be mobile. You would be moving around in your sentence. Sometimes you would be in the front, sometimes in the second position, and at other times you would be at the very end. That would make life interesting for you since it is pleasant not to be in the same place all the time. There would be consistency in your life as a verb, for you nearly always end in <u>en</u>. Occasionally you end in just <u>n</u>, but that adds a bit of variety to your life. Sometimes you would be weak, and the sign of this weakness is a <u>t</u>. In the simple past tense, the sign is a <u>te</u>. In your past participle you start with a <u>ge</u> and end in a <u>t</u>. Always there is a <u>t</u>, for this is the sign of your weakness. But you can be strong, too. You would get to change your vowel or consonant, and sometimes you would even become a whole new word, like getting a new outfit. If you are strong, your past participle, like your relative, the weak verb, starts with <u>ge</u> but always ends in <u>en</u>. If you were a verb, let's hope you would realize that: The life of a verb / Is not just a blurb. / It's very exciting / And quite inviting. / Sometimes weak, sometimes strong, / Always moving along, / A verb is exciting / For speaking and writing.
> (Herr, 1979, p. 37)

An ancient Greek mnemonic device, the mental walk (Neisser, 1972) or loci method, would be an interesting one to try in the teaching of language arts at any level for aiding vocabulary acquisition or the teaching of any body of factual material. A familiar physical location is selected -- the room, the school, the supermarket, the city, etc. One then takes or is guided in a mental walk around this location, putting various objects at specific places. One can take the walk again at anytime and retrieve the objects.

Impromptu guided imagery has also proved to be a means of incorporating what would otherwise be a distrubance into the teaching and learning. A train or helicopter may go by and clearly divert everyone's attention, or any number of other outside interferences may disrupt the class. One can refocus everyone's attention by thinking quickly: "What is that? What do you hear? A helicopter. Why might it be flying over? It's the 'Flight for Life' helicopter, talking..." And the teacher can continue weaving image and story. The teacher in any discipline can cleverly use such in interruption for a productive though brief journey into the imagination. The foreign language teacher has a distinct advantage since nearly anything is legitimate as long as it is in the target language. But that same helicopter could be used by the junior high science teacher for a short explanation of aerodynamics in the guise of the image. Students could also be involved actively in the construction of the image through the positing of questions and solicitation of answers.

It is hoped that these several different examples can serve as a stimulus for ideas on the usage of guided imagery in the classroom. While little statistically verificable research on the effect of this technique in the classroom has been conducted, it has proven effective in my experience as well as that of others who have tried it. There is ample evidence in the

field of psychology that visualization enhances memory (Marks, 1972, p. 105) though most such research is of clinical nature rather than applied in education.

Guided imagery provides the teacher with a technique to produce emotional involvement, and this technique can be easily employed by anyone interested in doing so. It also stimulates memory ability, a vital ingredient in determining success in our school systems. Consequently, guided imagery provides us with the chance to enhance the learning of our students.

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